OCT. 31-NOV. 7

MATWATCH

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STEVE'S SIDELIGHTS
By Steve Beverly
MATWATCH Editor

THE THIRD QUARTER ON CABLE

Program (Service)	Rating	Households (in millions)
1. Award Theatre (TBS)	3.3	1.51
2. College Football Assn. (ESPN)	3.0	1.44
3. WWF Wrestling (USA)	3.1	1.40
4. Prime Movie 1 (TBS)	2.9	1.34
5. Brady Bunch (TBS)	2.7	1.24
6. National Geo. Explorer (TBS)	2.6	1.21
7. Beverly Hillbillies (TBS)	2.6	1.18
8. Munsters (TBS)	2.5	1.18
9. WWF All American Wrestling (USA)	2.6	1.18
10. Andy Griffith (TBS)	2.6	1.17

This is it....and the story is not terribly pretty if you're an executive at TBS, though it's not a disaster.

For the first six years of national measurement by A.C. Nielsen, the two primary NWA (and for nine months, WWF) wrestling shows on TBS were top ten powerhouses. In the early '80s, the Saturday WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING edition stood head and shoulders above the rest of the pack and the mid '80s saw the Sunday show (which at one time was Bill Watts' Mid-South show) top the list.

This past week, ELECTRONIC MEDIA offered the Top 10 and for the second straight quarter, neither TBS show is on it and both WWF cable efforts are.

For the specifics, Saturday WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING on TBS ranked 11th with a 2.5 rating, its lowest ever for a single quarter, down two-tenths from the April-June level, with 1.169 million homes delivered (NOTE: even though the rating is higher than some shows in the top 10 because various cable networks reach differing numbers of homes, the rankings are figured on total homes penetrated).

NWA MAIN EVENT, in its first full quarter of measurement in the Sunday at 5:35 (now 6:05) slot (it was pre-empted six times in the second quarter), stayed flat at 2.4 with 1.093 million homes to rank 17th.

The two WWF shows stayed virtually flat in overall rating from the second quarter which doesn't indicate a mad flux of fans switching allegiances but this is the second straight quarter the Titan efforts have outdelivered the NWA on national cable, something which has to be an embarrassment to the Turner people and is essential to address now that TBS is majority owner of the NWA.

Some possible factors for the continued NWA decline:

---Increased competition on cable. The Saturday TBS show now faces head-on competition from ESPN college football which wasn't there two years ago in the fall. Yet, the competitive cable offerings on Sunday are like cold toast.

---Better offerings overall on cable. Susan Graening of ELECTRONIC MEDIA told MATWATCH, "It stands to reason that as cable can offer better quality first-run programming that appeals to a broader base of audience, the rankings for the wrestling shows will continue to go down."

---The biggest reason: the NWA on TBS has been in the toilet for two years now with the exception of its live specials. Letter after letter and call after call from many of you indicate to me that WCW has long since ceased to be a compelling program for you to watch and if you tape it, you generally fast forward it just to see if a rare moment of excitement occurs.

One of the nation's top wrestling media analysts, who would not want to be named, told me recently, "I can tell you simply why the numbers are down. It's not because people are drifting away from pro wrestling or that the rest of cable is that much better. It's because wrestling fans are sophisticated enough to understand when the quality of a TV wrestling program is poor." The same expert predicted that if TBS pays attention to the weekly efforts, it could turn those ratings around inside of a quarter and I agree.

Wrestling fans are a discerning lot and because so much of it is available on cable and in syndication, only loyalists to a specific alliance will sit still for a squash match/interview format and we've all written this enough times that the powers that be know it... well, maybe all but Mr. Runnels.

Unless I'm way off the mark, I can tell you Ted Turner is interested in reviving these ratings for two key reasons: ad revenue, which declines as ratings and demographics do; and a base to promote pay-per-view shows. It's no secret that if TBS is one's prime source to promote a STARRCADE or BASH, and less than 1.2 million homes are tuned to the NWA on TBS, the base is

well short of what is needed to promo a rocket-launcher of a PPV show.

Both of these are big-money reasons and with the investment TBS has made in the NWA, you can bet your last money Turner will demand two weekend shows which can and should draw larger audiences than a 12th rerun of THE BRADY BUNCH.

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RATINGS RAP
(Weekend Ending Oct. 2)

	RATING	MARKETS	PCT./U.S.
WWF	8.4	257	97%
NWA	5.5	152	90%

(ANALYSIS: Slight gain for the NWA but another sizeable drop for the WWF which could be credited to 3 things: heavy college football competition, the Olympics wrapup in some markets and the gradual inertia that is setting into both alliances' shows.)

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C O M I N G S & G O I N G S!!!

---Some STARRCADE hints are trickling down... some I like, some I don't. I'm hearing more and more that we'll have another Flair-Luger round, perhaps in a cage. Including the Bash PPV, I think there have been so many screw job endings on the circuit with that pair that it would be about as effective as another Kerry-Lawler rematch. If it happens, bet on no DQ in a cage. And in that case, unless Dusty can innovate yet a new screw job, Luger would almost have to win the title.

---I have it on good authority that the Jim Cornette Midnight Express and Paul E. Dangerously's Original Midnight Express won't meet in an actual match until STARRCADE. But lots of jockeying will go on beforehand and a big angle perhaps on the Dec. 7 CLASH OF THE CHAMPIONS will set it up.

---By the way, the Dec. 7 CLASH IV will be in Chattanooga.

---Another strong possibility is a 6-man tag with Rick Steiner, Sting (the man who should be wrestling Flair) & Eddie Gilbert vs. Kevin Sullivan & The New Varsity Club (Mike Rotunda & possibly Steve Williams).

---The Road Warriors will battle Dusty & Bam Bam Bigelow and I wish you could see the reax of folks when I bounce that off of them.

---What I sadly fear with Sting is that if Dusty continues his traditional methods (as long as the Turner people allow him to continue in power), Sting is vulnerable to being diluted as "one of the boys" when he ought to be carrying the NWA. One colleague of mine went so far as to say he could wind up "in the Brad Armstrong position," which would be a tragedy. TBS, you've got a winner in that kid. Listen to your audience.

---Business was up slightly last week in the CWF. Dothan was up $1,000 and Montgomery did an estimated $4,100 house for the TV taping but that's well down from its $7,000 usual.

---You FNN/SCORE viewers won't see this during November but in two weeks, we'll see Dutch Mantel turn heel. Brad & Bob Armstrong have a double sleeper on Tony Anthony & Jerry Stubbs. Dutch is at the commentator's table and as the Dirty White Girl gets ready to interfere, Dutch excuses himself, goes to the ring, pushes aside Mystic and promptly bashes the Armstrongs over the head. Tune in tomorrow....

---CWF, of course, is still in transition and I'm probably more patient than some folks, but I can see two major problems: too much Bullet on the babyface side and too many Anthony-Stubbs attack jobs. Maybe Dutch's turn will help rotate some of the heat but this group needs a turn of an established face...maybe even Tim Horner, although Tim can't carry the circuit.

---With the Jerry Jarrett buy-in to World Class apparently on hold, a new speculation surfaced this week that the AWA and World Class have discussed merging under a new name. Maybe they could bring in Sputnik Monroe as commissioner.

---Your ballot in the next two editions of MATWATCH will feature one for the BEST OF....awards and the WORST OF...will be in the Nov. 14 edition. A full explanation will be included.

---We will also include an opinion question that I know many of you would like to sound off about involving a personnel matter in a major organization. The full results will be published in our MATWATCH '88: THE ANNUAL BEYOND which you can order in time for Christmas (see order form).

---Syndication notes: WORLD WIDE WRESTLING is back on in Montgomery, AL on WCOV at 5 on Saturdays, leading into CWF. WXTX in Columbus rotates its order this week with SCW going to Tuesday, WWF SUPERSTARS to Wednesday, and NWA MAIN EVENT to Friday. GLOW (Monday) and CWF (Thursday) stay put.

---Whatever happened to.....J.C. Dykes... Lorenzo Parente...Sean Royal...Leo Garibaldi...or MATWATCHer Dan Gibson's all-time favorite, Bronco Kelly?

---USA will air an Election Night WWF Spectacular Nov. 8, taped in Paris, headlined by a Randy Savage vs. Junkyard Dog (you're kidding?) title match. It'll still be more interesting than Dukakis-Bush.

---From Dan Wolfe of FNN: Prime Cable in Atlanta has picked up the Dec. 13 SUPER CLASH III PPV as have both cable systems in Dallas. Still no clearance in St. Louis or Birmingham.

---Some suggestion has been made to go after Brad Armstrong & Tim Horner or Brad & Tom Prichard to replace the departed Top Guns in the mixed 6-man tag match on SCIII.

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PINFALL PROFILE: CORNETTE & DANGEROUSLY

It's a pilot for a new fall series, WAR OF THE WORDS. Can you imagine what late fall and this coming winter is going to be like in at least one aspect of NWA life? Just thinking of Jim Cornette & Paul E. Dangerously on the same set is a hilarious, if frightening concept.

There is a distinct difference in the humor of these two guys. Cornette is straight from the stand-up comedian school and, frankly, he'd make a great guest host for EVENING AT THE IMPROV on cable. Dangerously's is more of a character humor with an occasional impersonation tossed in (Paul E. graduated from the top of the class of the School of Roddy Piper Soundalikes); plus, in the small promotions of which he's been associated, Dangerously has had to work harder at getting less-than-magnetic personalities over.

Get this crazy scenario: they could bring back Ken Osmond (he of LEAVE IT TO BEAVER and that magnificent CLASH OF THE CHAMPIONS I skit) and let him open up the Haskell School of Wrestling. Both Cornette & Dangerously bring their Midnight Express teams in for "continuing education." And since Cornette has to assume the babyface role in this feud, Jimbo finds out that Eddie Haskell has taken a payoff to lock Cornette away in the gym to prevent him from being at ringside for a key Express-Express match. Yeah, it sounds like a Vince angle but it's a sample of the potential this feud has.

Frankly, I'm surprised this is happening in the NWA because it sounds too creative for their style of booking. Plus, there is always the chance---particularly with the reflective style of television---that two personalities as strong as Cornette & Paul E. could burn out quickly if they're overexposed in a head-on feud.

However, the idea of a situation where Cornette "meets his match at the mouth" is awfully intriguing and this career move could be the biggest catalyst in Dangerously's career. One bet, though: as long as the current NWA booker is still in place, Paul E. won't suggest that if Hot Stuff Eddie Gilbert is suspended "he'll just follow everyone's example and come right back in as the Midnight Rider."

* *

I REMEMBER: Leo Garibaldi vs. Dandy Jack

At one point, Leo Garibaldi and his brother were heel terrors in both Northeast and West Coast rings. Leo even held a version of the world junior heavyweight title in the '50s. But by 1965, a few too many bumps had left Leo with enough back ailments that he settled into life as a referee for the Georgia NWA promotion.

But as a personality, Garibaldi often became a focal point of many of the angles. As a referee, he'd never have been caught the victim of a Dave/Earl Hebner fiasco. Leo was much too forceful.

But the emergence of the villainous El Mongol on the Georgia scene put Leo full scale into a confrontation with Mongol's manager, Dandy Jack Crawford, whom Leo had come across when Jack was "a bum referee," as Garibaldi called him, in the Midwest.

Repeated run-ins, distractions and use of the ever-present Crawford's cane led to a showdown between ref and manager in the unlikely town of Waycross, Ga. In fact, it was the only 3-out-of-5 fall match I've ever seen.

Ironically, the Garibaldi-Crawford match drew a record house for the tiny auditorium that not even Nick Bockwinkel vs. Jack Brisco topped. The match itself was uneventful. Crawford, who had to be pushing 60, moved with the grace of Jethro Bodine. But people were in a frenzy to see the detested little manager get squashed.

The highlight of the whole 18 minutes (Leo won all three falls) was when Garibaldi picked up Dandy Jack and dumped him head-first into one of the huge orange trash barrels in the aisle. My old buddy, Sammy Gaskins, and his father had been spitting tobacco juice into that barrel all night and James Pittman, the high school custodian, had been dipping snuff and depositing his remains. I've never seen a 60-year-old man move so fast as did Jack out of that can.

Leo only returned to Waycross once subsequently, several years later for a similar match with Homer O'Dell. I'll leave it to your imagination where Homer ended the evening. Only difference: the city had banned chewing and dipping in the City Auditorium.

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TV TEMPO (Weekend of Oct. 28-30)

RATING KEY: PINFALL! - Must See. PILEDRIVER - Excellent. POWERSLAM - Good. DRAW - Average. RESTHOLD - Fair. BOMB - Poor. PLUS - Midscale rating.

(WWC) - Ricky Santana d. Chicky Starr; Victor Jovica & Invader III d. Assassin & The Exotic; Invader III loses to Bobby Jaggers; TNT d. Eddie Gilbert. POWERSLAM.

(MEMPHIS) - Nature's Best d. Keith Eric/Blue Knight; Jimmy Golden/Robert Fuller d. Robert Long/Alan Reynolds; RPMs d. Ken Raper/John Lee; Bill Dundee/Todd Morton d. Rough & Ready; Phil Hickerson & Cactus Jack Foley d. Scott Steiner/Brian Lee. ANGLE: Fuller comes out on crutch and claims he can't wrestle Jeff Jarrett in a "no interference" match but Jeff comes out and chases Fuller with Robert's boot. Robert runs just fine so Randy Hales declares him fit enough to wrestle. POWERSLAM.

(SOUTHERN) - RECAP SHOW: Abdullah the Butcher vs. Mr. Big; Texas Outlaws (Deaton Brothers) d. Bucky Siegler/Rick McCall; recap of Tommy Rich turn; replay of Dino Minelli/Steve Lawler tar & feathering Joey Maggs; plus, announcement of Michael Hayes coming in to take on Rich. DRAW-PLUS....not a bad highlight show.

(WORLD CLASS) - Jimmy Jack Funk d. Steve Casey; Kendall Windham d. Dr. Who; highlights of Cotton Bowl matches; update on Oct. 15; Steve Cox vs. Fatu evolves into four-man brawl so it becomes a Hayes-Cox vs. Samoan Swat Team tag match which ends in a melee. DRAW.

(PWTW) - WWF, in dressing room with WWF stars during Atlanta Omni card; WWF, Hercules Hernandez angle in which Herc rallies from attack by Virgil & Ted DiBiase when Herc refuses to become Ted's slave; SCW, Jerry Lawler d. Tommy Rich on reverse decision in AWA title match; AWA, SUPER CLASH III preview; MEMPHIS, Sid Vicious joins Stud Stable; W. CLASS, Super Black Ninja & Kendo Nagasaki attack Kevin Von Erich. MARS WRESTLER OF WEEK - Hernandez. POWERSLAM.

(WWF) - SPOTLIGHT: Bad News Brown d. Jim Walsh; King Haku d. Hillbilly Jim; Tito Santana d. Pork-chop Cash; Other winners: Jake Roberts, Honky Tonk Man, Powers of Pain. REPLAY: Hulk/Bossman angle. SUPERSTARS: Greg Valentine d. Scott Casey; Rockers d. Sandy Beach/Brian Costello; Other winners: Demolition, Terry Taylor, Bad News Brown, Brutus Beefcake, Honky Tonk Man. BROTHER LOVE: Hercules Hernandez & Randy Savage join forces.

(SNME/WWF) - Jake Roberts d. Rick Rude and wraps Damian around Andre the Giant, who promptly collapses from the shock; WWF TAG TITLE: Demolition d. Hart Foundation when Rougeaus toss Jimmy Hart's megaphone to Ax who uses it on Neidhart; Hulk Ho-

gan d. King Haku; Dino Bravo d. Ken Patera; Bubba Bossman d. Jim Powers. DRAW-PLUS...Roberts-Rude-Andre stuff good but others just so-so.

(CWF) - Brad Armstrong d. Mark Pyle; CWF TAG TITLE: Jerry Stubbs/Tony Anthony stripped of belts when Alan Martin uses 2x4 on Lord Humongous, who was teamed with Tim Horner; Masa Chono d. Lee Peek; Grappler II d. Bucky Siegler; Danny Davis wins countout over Ken Wayne (Davis had masqueraded as The Executioner); Johnny & Davey Rich d. The Invader & The Equalizer and unmask The Equalizer. ANGLE: Davis jumps Wayne and starts showcloser brawl that goes all over building. POWERSLAM.

(NWA/TBS) - Fantastics d. David Isley/Agent Steel; Eddie Gilbert d. Jerry Price; Other winners: Kevin Sullivan, Sheepherders, Perez/Zbyszko, Ron Simmons. (A.M.) (P.M.): Midnight Express d. Mike Justice/David Isley; Ivan Koloff d. The Executioner; Other winners: Barry Windham, Gilbert, Fantastics, Varsity Club, P&Z, Russian Assassins, Sheepherders, Italian Stallion, Simmons. Plus, recap of Sting/Road Warriors split. BOMB...both shows.

(NWA/SYND.) - WORLD WIDE: Eddie Gilbert d. George South; Other winners: Midnight Express, Sullivan/Mike Rotunda, Simmons, P&Z, Russian Assassins. STRAIGHT TALK: Magnum w. Oliver Humperdink. RECAP: Sting/Warriors followup. BOMB-PLUS. NWA PRO: Sheepherders d. Darrin Stephens/Trent Knight; Rick Steiner d. George South; Other winners: Simmons, Sheepherders, Bam Bam Bigelow (from TBS), Koloffs. LOUISVILLE SLUGGER: Jim Cornette w. Jimmy Garvin & Eddie Gilbert. BOMB-PLUS.

LINES OF THE WEEK - 1. Jesse Ventura, SNME: "Cheryl Roberts is the Robin Givens of professional wrestling." 2. Jim Ross, TBS: "Dusty Rhodes doesn't look like Sting. He doesn't look like a lot of athletes but that's irrelevant." 3. Oliver Humperdink, TBS: "Cornette, you're the only guy that makes George Bush look macho." 4. Cornette, WORLD WIDE: "We know he (David Crockett) can tell time; now we'll have to work on his special education." 5. Dutch Mantel, CWF, when The Equalizer is unmasked: "Who is that? It could be Jimmy Hoffa." 6. Demolition Ax, SNME: "Tonight, we'll be conservative and let them (Harts) be liberals." 7. Gene Okerlund, SNME: "The Big Bossman makes Dirty Harry look like Regis Philbin." 8. Rick Steiner, TBS: "Eddie says you (Sullivan) are stealing money from me." 9. Ross, TBS: "He (Paul Jones) is a son-of-a-Gorbacev...S.O.G."

STRONGEST COMMENTS - 1. Jesse Ventura, SNME, on Hogan's post-match posing: "Take a look at the ego... it was never bigger." 2. Ventura, FNN, THE FAN SPEAKS OUT, on who the worst person is he ever wrestled for: "That can be answered in two words...Verne Gagne."

BEST PICTURES - 1. NBC, SNME, for closeup of Bobby Heenan attempting to administer CPR to Andre. 2. NBC, SNME, for shot of Heenan being accidentally chopped by Haku.

WORST IDEA - WWF, SPOTLIGHT, for Halloween lookalike of Lord Alfred Hayes.

BLOOPER AWARD - Tony Schiavone, NWA, for comment "memories that you'll never forget." I thought a memory IS something you never forget.

BOO AWARDS - 1. NWA WORLD WIDE, to David Crockett for obnoxious introduction of the "bodacious Precious." 2. WWF, for giving us almost duplicate end as Summer Slam on SNME Demolition-Harts title match, proving Dusty Rhodes hasn't patented repeat finishes.

PARTING BLOWS

The Russians d. Koloffs by DQ in opening round U.S. tag tournament match taped in Saginaw (crowd about 2,000)....next week, NWA has billed Gilbert/Simmons vs. Perez/Zbyszko as first-round tournament match on TV....Road Warriors are being cheered big in several NWA cities (are you surprised, considering the amount of focus the interviews have placed on Dusty?)....also in Saginaw, Sting d. Flair by DQ and made a dramatic rip off of his neck brace....I felt the newscast setting was a bit stiff for Sting's response Saturday but it was one of the few bright spots aside from Steiner's continued great comedy....CWF tag belts will be decided Nov. 11 in a tournament in Knoxville... the promotion also plans a big Thanksgiving night card in K-town....Nov. 5 CWF in Chattanooga....The Bullet vs. Willie B. Hert, Kokina vs. Willie B. (Pez is taking on a tall order for one night), Alan Martin vs. Lee Peek, Masa Chono vs. Mark Pyle, and CWF TITLE: Prichard vs. Grappler II. That one won't sell.

More SNME post-mortem next week, but some random early thoughts: I was watching while Rebecca had taken over driving us home from the Auburn-Florida game and I loved the Roberts-Rude-Andre stuff (though, I'm told the arena crowd was told Andre had made a "miraculous" recovery in order to wrestle later that night)....the Demolition/Harts match was perfectly fine until that repeat ending (yes, we do remember, promoters....and wasn't it curious that this was the first SNME of the season and no sign of the WWF champion (are we SURE Dusty isn't booking them by mail?)....plus, isn't this Elizabeth association with Hogan just telegraphing an eventual split between Hulk & Randy?

Final thoughts: Wild West will revive TV tapings in San Bernadino CA this weekend with several ladies' matches, the Guerrero brothers, Bill Irwin, Iceman Parsons and Missing Link....Chavo Guererro took on Terry Funk in an indie show in the L.A. area last Saturday night....next week, I'll have a full review of Jesse Ventura's appearance on the FNN call-in show in PINFALL PROFILE but I'm told Jesse was refreshingly honest (though he didn't knock the WWF at all, of course) on most subjects and had a few comments about Flair, the other promotions, and his own storied career. He did say his most treasured moment was when he sold out the arena in St. Paul and 19,000 people were yelling, "Jesse sux! Jesse sux!" at the top of their lungs. Only Jesse! Till next time, may God bless. FSB.

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